

# Musgrave brings debate to Greeley



Musgrave

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The problem with the Endangered Species Act is that it can make farmers "endangered", a U.S. representative from Oklahoma said in Greeley Monday.

Rep. Frank Lucas, R-Okla., was chairman of an environmental event coordinated by Rep. Marilyn Musgrave.

Musgrave, who represents the 4th District of Colorado, which includes all of Weld County, scheduled the congressional hearing in Greeley to discuss the Endangered Species Act and its impact on agricultural workers.

The five-member panel was mostly critical of the 30-year-old

## Could Endangered Species Act make ag endangered?

act, which has had little success in restoring endangered species and can often be used to place restrictions on the agricultural community instead of working with it to find solutions, members said.

"We don't intend to have to list farmers and producers as 'endangered' just because they have endangered species on their land," Lucas said.

The need to preserve and protect plants and animals is not controversial, but the correct way to do it often is, he said.

As a member of a rural community who now represents a mostly rural district, Musgrave

said the issue is near to her heart.

"The act is well-intended but people have not been talking about the lack of success in protecting species and the cost burden placed on landowners," Musgrave said. "We need to look at the failures of the Endangered Species Act and determine how to be more successful."

Out of 1,304 species listed as endangered during the past 30 years, only 16 have been recovered and de-listed, said Jim Sims, executive president of Partnership for the West.

Farmers who find endangered species on their lands face regula-

tions and other disincentives, leading some to "shoot, shovel and shut up," rather than report the discovery to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sims said.

If the act is to be successful, the government and environmental groups will have to work with farmers and landowners to provide them with incentives when they comply rather than punishment when they do not, panel members said.

"Society has to decide what is important," said Alan Foutz, president of the Colorado Farm Bureau. "If society thinks that growing or saving a species is

more important than me growing food, then there ought to be an economic incentive so I can continue to support my family."

There is no doubt that society is in favor of saving endangered species, said Forest Guardian member Lauren McCain, who was sitting in the audience of about 20 people.

McCain's statistics show that 86 percent of the American public is in favor of the Endangered Species Act in its present form and 95 percent believe it is important to protect wildlife habitat.

The act has also been successful, she said, saving 98 percent of the listed species from extinction, including the bald eagle, grizzly bear and whooping crane.